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"THE OHIO VALLEY COVERS UP"

Broadcast No. 16 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

Aug. 13, 1938 6 - 6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

MUSIC: I Get the Blues When It Rains...

ANNOUNCER

Millions of acres of productive agricultural land lie uncovered each winter, easy prey to pelting rains and melting snows. But not all farmers are content to see their precious soil melt away before wintry drizzles or wintry storms, for they have learned to keep the ground clothed with a protective blanket of vegetation. The use of cover crops is not new. The ancient Greeks and Romans urged it, Theophrastus, Pliny, Cato. And an Ohio farmer urges it today, as he looks back on past days when his father, Isaac Alban, ran a sawmill and at the same time tried to operate a hilly farm in rugged Jackson County...

SOUND: Steam-driven buzz-saw eating into lumber, then idling, with engine chuff-chuff-chuffing and saw-wheel whirling through following sequence...

ALBAN

Dad, wonder if you've got time to come help Herb and me with the chores. It's gonna be dark before long, and we're gettin' behind.

ISAAC

Yes, guess so. Wait 'til I cut this darn thing off.

SOUND: Lever grating, engine gradually dies away with a few last "chuff-chuffs."

SOUND: Footsteps of two men walking along gravelly country road during following sequence...

ISAAC

This thing of running a sawmill is all right, but bless my soul if I ain't gettin' tired of this farm. Even if I was born here, I don't like it. Guess I just wasn't cut out for farming.

ALBAN

Well, we haven't got any level land, that's the truth. All we've got is hills, and they're getting washed awful bad.

ISAAC

I know they are, but what're you gonna do? Look at that hill over there! Gullies, gullies, gullies. And look back there on that pasture, or I shouldn't even call it a pasture. Bald spots are showin' up everywhere.

ALBAN

Dad, why don't you turn the farm over to me and let me run it.

ISAAC

...uh...what's that?

ALBAN

I mean it. I've been reading some, and I've been talking to some of the extension folks from Ohio State. I have a few ideas of my own. You know, Dad, I think I can turn this old hill farm into a good one.

ISAAC

Leslie, you might at that. Guess you've been doing most of the work, all along. Well, now, just where would you start?

ALBAN

We've got to get some legumes in here, to build up the soil. And before we get any legumes, we've got to lime the fields. The first dollars I'd spend would be for lime...

MUSIC...

SOUND: Elderly woman humming to herself, as she irons...iron clinking on stove occasionally through following sequence...



MOTHER

Seems as though you've been doing a lot lately, Leslie. Won't even come in for your meals.

ALBAN

You just think I won't. Why, Mother, I can smell your fried potatoes a mile away.

MOTHER

Well, you have certainly changed a lot of farming habits around here. You were the first to use a manure spreader, and now the Joneses, the Davies...in fact, all the neighbors are using them. You were the first to lime your fields, and everyone is doing that, too.....Leslie, are you listening?

SOUND: Throwing down paper.

ALBAN

...Oh, Mother, pardon me. I was listening. But I was also reading this farm magazine. Here's quite an interesting article about cover crops.

MOTHER

Cover crops? You must mean clover crops.

ALBAN (laughing)

Well, yes, and no. This article was written by a man from Penn State College and he gives some suggestions for keeping the ground covered with some sort of vegetation during the winter, when the land usually is bare.

MOTHER

That's when you get most of your soil washing, isn't it?

ALBAN

Yes, it is, and that's got me thinking. This article says that by planting a winter cover crop I can keep the land from washing, and can use the crop for early spring pasture, when the regular pastures are too soft, or I can turn them under to improve the soil...

MUSIC...

ANNOUNCER

Seven years ago, Leslie Alban decided to cover his land during the winter. During those seven years, he has learned much about soil conservation...

ALBAN

Here, Herb, give me a hand, will you? That's crimson clover there. Now, let me look at that mixture the county agent gave me.

HERB

Here it is. Says 6 pounds of crimson clover to the acre. That means 36 pounds on that 6-acre field. Shall I dump it in?

ALBAN

Go ahead.

SOUND: Thirty-six pounds of small seed pouring into washtub.

HERB

Now, what's next?

ALBAN

Here's the mixture. You got the crimson clover. Now, sweet clover, alsike, and hairy vetch.

SOUND: More seed being poured into washtub. Stirred up with stick as...

HERB

Hey! What's that in those cans? Say, what are you doing, anyhow?

ALBAN

This is inoculant. The county agent told me about it. You see, most legume seed should be inoculated with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, especially where it's to be planted on land that has never grown legumes before.

HERB

So that's to make sure we get a good catch.

ALBAN

Right! Now, that's enough. The thing is, Herb...

HERB

Listen, Leslie, I've been with you long enough to know what to do. You sow this mixture broadcast at the time of the last cultivation of corn.

ALBAN

That's the general idea, Herb, but this year we're too late for that. Here it is the middle of August, but we can still get in a cover crop.

HERB

I didn't know that.

ALBAN

We can, though, and we're going to. I got this idea from Earl Jones up at Ohio State. You go in there and broadcast this seed, and we'll cover it up with a one-horse drag. Then, when winter comes, we'll have a nice cover...

MUSIC...

ANNOUNCER

And as winter comes, Leslie Alban will have a blanket of leguminous vegetation to protect the land from soil erosion. He will have pasture for his beef cattle in early spring...and next year, when he grows corn again, the nitrate received from the legumes plowed under will enrich his corn and improve his crop production...and this winter, there will be no soil erosion on the Jackson County farm of Leslie Alban, for he is covering his land--with winter cover crops!

MUSIC...

ANNOUNCER

Leslie Alban is but one Ohio farmer, yet his courageous and successful efforts to protect his land from soil erosion typifies the spirit shown by farmers all over the land. And now, I want to ask Ewing Jones, of the Dayton, Ohio, regional office of the Soil Conservation Service, just what he thinks about Mr. Alban's cover crop program.

JONES

_____, you know what I think. Any farmer that has the forethought and the prudence to cover up his land during the winter has not only my admiration, but the thanks of a whole nation. After all, _____, the prosperity of the nation must depend to quite a large extent on individual efforts such as those of Leslie Alban.

ANNOUNCER

Naturally, Ewing. Then we might say that Mr. Alban is a masterful farmer, if you get what I mean.

JONES

I think I do. He took an eroded farm and built it up into a productive one. And he is a "masterful" farmer, if you want to use that word. He isn't content with the soil-saving methods he's now using, however. Just the other day, R. H. Morrish, the Soil Conservation Service regional agronomist, and I, were on Mr. Alban's farm, and he told us that he has quit seeding alfalfa alone on sloping meadows, but is seeding it with a grass mixture, because he's found that a mixture of alfalfa and grass is best to hold the soil. Also, he is taking up contour cultivation.

ANNOUNCER

Quite a rounded program. He has worked it out all by himself?

JONES

No, don't you remember---

ANNOUNCER

Oh, yes, he had the help of the extension service from Ohio State.

JONES

And from his county agricultural agent, which is a part of that service. But one thing, _____, he didn't have the help of this bulletin on cover crops. Like to look at it?

ANNOUNCER

Yes, I would. "Cover Crops for Soil Conservation." I've never seen this before. When did this cover crops bulletin come out?

JONES

Not long ago. It gives certain recommendations for seeding winter cover crops which ought to be quite helpful this time of year.

ANNOUNCER

And copies of this bulletin can be secured by writing you?

JONES

Yes, we'll send a copy of "Cover Crops" to anyone writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. And I might add that the various state agricultural colleges have prepared similar bulletins which I am sure they will send to interested parties. For example, the University of Tennessee agronomist, H. E. Hendricks, has just published bulletins on alfalfa, lime, phosphate, and legumes... and a number of...

MORRISH

Ewing, do you mind if I join you?

JONES

Oh, certainly not, Hipe. _____, this is R. H. Morrish, our regional agronomist I mentioned a moment ago.

ANNOUNCER

Agronomist. If my Greek lessons serve me correctly, "agronomist" means a manager of the land.

MORRISH

Well, the technical definition of agronomy is something like "the application of scientific principles to the cultivation of land."

ANNOUNCER

All right, we have that settled. But pardon me, what were you going to say?

MORRISH

Ewing was talking about Tennessee. I thought you might be interested in a letter I just received from Mr. Hendricks. The extension service in Tennessee is completing its annual cover crop campaign, and there are some rather interesting figures.

ANNOUNCER

Let's have them.

MORRISH

In 1936, about 800 thousand acres were seeded to winter cover crops. The next year, more than a million acres were seeded. And now Mr. Hendricks writes that indications are that this year the total will go over a million and a half.

ANNOUNCER

Then Tennessee is covering up in a big way.

MORRISH

Indeed it is. This year, according to Hendricks, 93 county meetings were held, with an attendance of approximately 7,000 farmers, and community meetings are now underway.

JONES

Hipe, aren't the results of the campaign in Madison County typical of those being secured all over the state?

MORRISH

Yes, they are, Ewing, and Madison County is a typical West Tennessee cotton county. Down there, cotton is one of the most erosion-inducing crops, just as corn is around Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. But to get back to the cover crop campaign, M. D. Brock is the county agent in Madison County. He's had the help of such progressive farmers as Roy Ozier, N. T. Mayo, and A. R. Matthews. There have been 42 meetings this year in that one county alone, and here's the story: we expect an increase of more than 50 percent of cover crops over last year.

JONES

And what cover crops are being used?

MORRISH

Crimson clover and vetch are most common. Then come rye grass, grass and legume mixtures, wheat, oats, rye, barley, bur clover, and winter peas. The whole thing adds up to this, Ewing: keep the ground covered during the winter, when it is usually bare.

JONES

Well, Hipe, we've been talking about the wonderful cover crops record being made in Tennessee this year, but before you get away, I wish you'd give us a few suggestions for, say, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky.

MORRISH

If you'll let me include Michigan, too. You know, that's my home state.

JONES

That's right, you are a Wolverine. All right, including Michigan...

MORRISH

Wheat is one of the most popular of all cover crops in this region. It serves a dual purpose, by controlling erosion, and by serving as a cash crop. Rye is also a good cover crop, or a mixture of rye and vetch.

JONES

I don't want to throw cold water on your suggestions, because fifty million farmers can't be wrong, to make a bad pun. But don't farmers object to spending money for the seed to control erosion?

MORRISH

They used to, Ewing, but no more. The seed for a cover crop costs them money, but--here's what they get in return: prevention of soil erosion, early spring pasture, organic matter in the soil which means improved crop yields. Do I make my point?

JONES

You certainly do, and thank you, R. H. Morrish, regional agronomist of the Soil Conservation Service. The experience of Leslie Alban, of Oak Hill, Ohio, the remarkable cover crop record being made by farmers in Tennessee, and your own timely suggestions all add up to...

SOUND: Following sequence should sound as though it were coming over radio.

ANNOUNCER

Land left bare during the winter is susceptible to soil erosion. Not only the soil itself, but agricultural limestone, phosphate, and fertilizers may wash away with each rain. But a winter cover crop will blanket and clothe the soil. If you would like to learn more about cover crops, send a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and ask for the bulletin, "Cover Crops."

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

SOUND: Snap of radio switch.

FARMER

Say, Marjorie, that sounds interesting. What he said about cover crops, and all.

WIFE

It sure does. You know you've been worrying about those gullies that form every winter on that field back of the barn. Maybe you ought to plant something on it.

FARMER

Get me a pencil and a penny postcard, Marjorie. I'm goin' to write to Soil Conservation...



WIFE

Dayton, Ohio...

FARMER

Yeah, that's it. Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and get that
bulletin on cover crops.

SOUND: Radio sequence ends.

MUSIC...

ANNOUNCER

Next week, Forest Farming.....

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

This is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

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